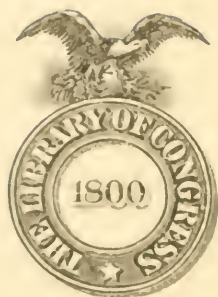


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CHANNING'S LETTER
TO THE
ABOLITIONISTS,
WITH COMMENTS.



E. P. Channing
A

LETTER

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TO THE

ABOLITIONISTS,

—
BY WILLIAM E. CHANNING.
—

WITH COMMENTS.

First published in the Liberator, Dec. 22, 1837.

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY ISAAC KNAPP,
25, CORNHILL.

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1837.

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LETTER.

BOSTON, Dec. 14, 1837.

MY FRIENDS :

A recent event induces me to address to you a few remarks. I trust you will not ascribe them to a love of dictation, and especially that you will not think me capable of uttering a word of censure, in deference to the prejudices and passions of your opposers. My sympathies are with the oppressed and persecuted. I have labored, in a darker day than this, to vindicate your rights; and nothing would tempt me at this moment to speak a disapproving word, if I thought I should give the slightest countenance to the violence under which you have suffered. I have spoken of the slight service which I have rendered, not as a claim for gratitude; for I only performed a plain duty; but as giving me a title to a candid construction of what I am now to offer.

You well know, that I have not been satisfied with all your modes of operation. I have particularly made objections to the organization and union of numerous and wide-spread societies for the subversion of slavery. I have believed, however, that many of the dangerous tendencies of such an association would be ob-

Ms. A. 9. 2. 10

viated by your adoption of what is called 'the peace principle;' in other words, by your unwillingness to use physical force for self-defence. To this feature of your society, I have looked as a pledge, that your zeal, even if it should prove excessive, would not work much harm. You can judge, then, of the sorrow with which I heard of the tragedy of Alton, where one of your respected brethren fell with arms in his hands. I felt, indeed, that his course was justified by the laws of his country, and by the established opinions and practice of the civilized world. I felt, too, that the violence, under which he fell, regarded as an assault on the press and our dearest rights, deserved the same reprobation from the friends of free institutions, as if he had fallen an unresisting victim. But I felt that a cloud had gathered over your society, and that a dangerous precedent had been given in the cause of humanity. So strong was this impression, that whilst this event found its way into other pulpits, I was unwilling to make it the topic of a religious discourse, but preferred to express my reprobation of it in another place, where it would be viewed only in its bearings on civil and political rights. My hope was, that the members of your society, whilst they would do honor to the fearless spirit of your fallen brother, would still, with one loud voice, proclaim their disapprobation of his last act, and their sorrow that through him a cause of philanthropy had been stained with blood. In this, I am sorry to say that I have been disappointed. I have seen, indeed, no justification of the act. I have seen a few disapproving sentences, but no such clear and general testimony against this error of the lamented

Lovejoy, as is needed to give assurance against its repetition. I have missed the true tone in 'the Emancipator,' the organ of your National Society. I account for this silence, by your strong sympathy with your slaughtered friend, and by your feeling as if one, who had so generously given himself to the cause, deserved nothing but praise. Allow me to say, that here you err. The individual is nothing, in comparison with the truth. Bring out the truth, suffer who may. The fact, that a good man has fallen through a mistaken conception of duty, makes it more necessary to expose the error. Death, courageously met in a good cause by a respected friend, may throw a false lustre over dangerous principles which were joined with his virtues. Besides, we do not dishonor a friend in acknowledging him to have erred. The best men err. The most honored defenders of religion and virtue have sometimes been impelled, by the very fervor which made them great, into rash courses. I regret, then, that your disapprobation of Mr. Lovejoy's resistance to force has not been as earnest, as your grateful acknowledgments of his self-consecration to a holy cause.

By these remarks, I do not mean, that I have adopted 'the peace principle' to the full extent of my late venerated friend, Dr. Worcester, whose spirit, were he living, would be bowed down by the sad story of Alton. I do not say, that a man may in no case defend himself by force. But, it may be laid down as a rule, hardly admitting an exception, that an enterprize of Christian philanthropy is not to be carried on by force; that it is time for philanthropy to stop, when it can only ad-

vance by wading through blood. If God does not allow us to forward a work of love without fighting for it, the presumption is exceedingly strong, that it is not the work, which he has given us to do. Is it asked, how such a cause, if assailed, is to be advanced? I answer, by appeals to the laws, and by appeals to the moral sentiment and the moral sympathies of the community. I answer, by resolute patience and heroic suffering. If patience and suffering, if truth and love will not touch a community, certainly violence will avail nothing. What! Shall men, whose starting point is the love of every human being, hope to make their way by slaughter? Shall a cause, which relies on the inculcation of the disinterested spirit of Christianity as its main instrument, seek aid in deadly weapons? Are we not shocked by this incongruity of means and ends? What fellowship has moral suasion with brute force? What concord between the report of the rifle and the teachings of philanthropy?

Let not this language be understood as in any measure extenuating the guilt of Mr. Lovejoy's murderers. They stand on the same ground as if they had slain an unresisting man. Their crime began before he took arms. Their crime drove him to arms. Because his cause was too philanthropic and holy to allow him to fight for it, are we therefore to justify the violence which drove him to the use of force? Our country is greatly dishonored by the apathy with which the death of this victim to our most sacred rights has been received. Had any other man but an abolitionist fallen in defence of property and the press, how many now cold would have spoken with indignation! Here

we learn how little the freedom of the press, considered as a *principle*, is understood by our citizens; and how few are prepared to maintain it on its true ground. Unless this freedom be complicated with a cause which they approve, the multitude care little for its violation. Unless it be wrested from their own party or friends, they will not trouble themselves with its defence; and here lies its danger. This freedom will never be assailed but in the person of an unpopular man; and unless defended in this case, will not be defended at all. The press of a powerful party will never be stormed, nor its editor shot. From such violence, the right of free discussion has nothing to fear. It is through a weak party, through the editor who resists public sentiment, that the freedom of the press is to receive its deadly wounds. For these reasons, I felt that there was a peculiar call for solemn public remonstrance against the outrage at Alton. In lamenting that Mr. Lovejoy died with arms in his hands, I do not palliate the crime of his foes, or diminish the obligation of every citizen to lift his voice against this fearful violation of civil rights.

Nothing is plainer than that Mr. Lovejoy, had he succeeded in his defence, could not have accomplished his purpose, but would have placed him in a position more unfavorable to doing good than before. Suppose him, by a sustained and well directed fire, to have repelled his assailants. Would he have planted his press at Alton? The following morning would have revealed the street strewn with dead bodies. Relatives, friends, the whole people of the surrounding country, would have rushed to the spot. What rage would have boiled in a thou-

sand breasts! What vows of vengeance would have broken from a thousand lips! The men, one and all, who had been engaged in the defence of the press, would probably have been torn limb from limb at the moment. If not, assassination would have dogged them night and day; and we should have been startled with successive reports of murders, till the last victim had fallen. Or suppose Mr. Lovejoy to have fled with hands stained with blood; could he have preached with success the doctrines of love? Would not that horrible night have been associated with all his future labors? Happy was it for himself, happy for your cause, that under such circumstances he fell. I beg that this language may not be so construed, as if I question the moral or religious worth of Mr. Lovejoy. I know nothing of him but good, except his last error; and that error does not amaze me. That a man hunted by ferocious foes, threatened with indignities to his person, and with death; and at the same time conscious of the greatness of his work, conscious that civil rights, as well as the interests of the oppressed, were involved in his decision; that a man, so tried, should fail in judgment, we need not wonder. He knew that the constitution and laws were on his side. He knew that the prevalent construction of the precepts of Christ, which gives a wide range to self-defence, was on his side. We can easily comprehend, how a good man, so placed, should have erred. I believe in his purpose to do and suffer for great truths and man's dearest rights. God forbid that I should give the slightest countenance to the scoffs of men, who, had he fallen on their side, would have lauded him to the skies.

It seems to me of great importance, that you should steadily disavow this resort to force by Mr. Lovejoy. There are peculiar reasons for it. Your position in our country is peculiar, and makes it important that you should be viewed as incapable of resorting to violent means.

In the first place, you are a large and growing party, and are possessed with a fervent zeal, such as has been unknown since the beginning of our revolutionary conflict. At the same time, you are distrusted, and, still more, hated by a multitude of your fellow-citizens. Here, then, are the elements of deadly strife. From masses so hostile, so inflamed, there is reason to fear tumults, conflicts, bloodshed. What is it which has prevented these sad results in the past, in the days of your weakness? Your forbearance; your unwillingness to meet force by force. Had you adopted the means of defence, which any other party, so persecuted, would have chosen, our streets might again and again have flowed with blood. Society might have been shaken by the conflict. If, now, in your strength, you take the sword, and repay blow with blow, what is not to be feared? It is one of the objections to great associations, that they accumulate a power, which, in seasons of excitement and exasperation, threatens public commotions, and which may even turn our country into a field of battle. I say, then, that if you choose to organize so vast a force for a cause which awakens fierce passions, you must adopt 'the peace principle' as your inviolable rule. You must trust in the laws, and in the moral sympathies of the community. You must try the power of suffering

for truth. The first christians tried this among communities more ferocious than our own. You have yourselves tried it, and through it have made rapid progress. To desert it might be to plunge the country into fearful contests, and to rob your cause of all its sanctity.

I proceed to another consideration. The South has denounced you as incendiaries; has predicted, from your associated efforts, insurrection and massacre within its borders. And what has been the reply which you and your friends have made? You and they have pointed to the prevalence of the peace-principle in your ranks, as a security against such effects. You have said, that you shrunk from the assertion of rights by physical force; that, could you approach the slave, you should teach him patience under wrongs, and should spare no effort to warn him against bloody and violent means of redress. What becomes of this defence, if you begin to wield the sword? Deeply moved as you are by the injuries of the slave, can you be expected to preach to him submission and peace, if you yourselves shall have caught the spirit of war, the scent of blood? Will the south have no cause of alarm, when the enemies of its 'domestic institutions' shall have sprung up from unresisting sufferers into warriors? Will not your foes at the North be armed with new weapons for your ruin? To me it seems, that if you choose to array your force under the standard of a vast organization, you are bound to give a pledge to the country that you will not violate its peace. Hitherto, I have appealed confidently to your pacific principles as securities against all wrongs. I have seen with indignation the violence of cow-

ardly and unprincipled men directed against an unresisting band. I trust that your friends will never have cause to grow faint in your defence. I trust that the tragedy of Alton will draw from you new assurances of your trust in God, in the power of truth, and in the moral sympathies of a christian people.

I have now accomplished the chief end which I proposed to myself in this communication. But the same spirit, which has suggested the preceding remarks, induces me to glance at other topics. This spirit is a most friendly one, a sincere desire for your purity and success.

I have more than once, as you well know, lamented the disposition of some, perhaps many of your members, to adopt violent forms of speech. In reply to this complaint, it has been said that the people, to be awakened, must be spoken to with strength; that soft whispers will not break their lethargy; that nothing but thunder can startle a community, steeped in selfish unconcern, to the wrongs of their neighbor. What can be done, it is asked, without strong language? I grant that great moral convictions ought to be given out with energy, and that the zeal which exaggerates them may be forgiven. But exaggerations in regard to *persons*, are not to be so readily forgiven. We may use an hyperbole in stating a truth. We must not be hyperbolical in setting forth the wrong doing of our neighbor. As an example of the unjust severity which I blame, it may be stated, that some among you have been accustomed to denounce slaveholders as 'robbers and man-stealers.' Now, robbery and stealing are words of plain signification. They imply that a man takes *consciously* and *with knowledge*

what belongs to another. To steal, is to seize privily, to rob, is to seize by force, the *acknowledged* property of one's neighbor. Now, is the slaveholder to be charged with these crimes? Does he *know* that the slave he holds is not his own? On the contrary, is there any part of his property, to which he thinks himself to have a stronger right? I grant that the delusion is a monstrous one. I repel with horror the claim of ownership of a human being. I can as easily think of owning an angel, as of owning a man. But do we not know, that there are men at the North, who, regarding the statute-book as of equal authority with the Sermon on the Mount, and looking on legal as synonymous with moral right, believe that the civil law can create property in a man, as easily as in a brute, and who, were they consistent, would think themselves authorized to put their parents under the lash, should the legislature decree, that at a certain age, the parent should become the slave of the child? Is it wonderful, then, that men, brought up in sight of enslaved human beings, in the habit of treating them as chattels, and amidst laws, religious teachings, and a great variety of institutions, which recognize this horrible claim, should seriously think themselves the owners of their fellow-creatures? We are sure, that they do view the slave as property; and thus viewing him, they are no more guilty of robbing and stealing, than one of you would be, who, by misapprehension, should appropriate to himself what belongs to another. And are we authorized to say, that there are none at the South, who, if they should discover their misapprehension, would choose to impoverish themselves, rather than live by

robbery and crime? Are all hearts open to our inspection? Has God assigned to us his prerogative of judgment? Is it not a violation of the laws of Christian charity, to charge on men, whose general deportment shows a sense of justice, such flagrant crimes as robbery and theft? It is said, that, by such allowances to the master, I have weakened the power of what I have written against slavery; that I have furnished a pillow for the conscience of the slaveholder. But truth is truth, and we must never wink it out of sight for the sake of effect. God needs not the help of our sophistry or exaggeration. For the sake of awakening sensibility, we must not, in our descriptions, add the weight of a feather to the sufferings of the slave, or the faintest shade to the guilt of the master. Slavery indeed, regarded as a violation of man's most sacred rights, should always be spoken of by us with the deepest abhorrence; and we ought not to conceal our fear, that, among those who vindicate it, in this free and Christian land, there must be many who wilfully shut their eyes on its wrongs, who are victims of a voluntary blindness, as criminal as known and chosen transgression. Let us speak the truth and the whole truth, and speak it in the language of strong conviction. But let neither policy nor passion carry us beyond the truth. Let a severe principle of duty, stronger than excitement, watch and preside over all our utterance.

Allow me here to speak of what seems to me a very objectionable mode of action, which your Society are inclined to adopt: I mean, the exclusion of slaveholders from the privileges of the Christian church. I did hope that the

partition walls, which an unenlightened zeal has so long erected round the communion table, were giving way; and that none would be excluded, except such as should give proof in their lives of hostility to the Christian law. That the Lord's Supper should be turned into a weapon of assault on our opponents, is a monstrous abuse of it. Will it be said, that the slaveholder cannot be a Christian, and must therefore be shut out? Do we not know, that God has true worshippers in a land of slavery? Is adherence to a usage, which has existed for ages in the church, an infallible proof of an unsanctified mind? Was not GRIMKE a Christian, whilst a slaveholder? My last conversation with that excellent man turned on slavery; and though he listened patiently to the hope, which I expressed, that this evil was to cease, he gave no response to my wishes and hopes. Let it not be said, that by excommunication, the conscience of the slaveholder will be awakened. We must not for this, or any other good, turn a Christian ordinance from its end. The Lord's Supper was instituted to unite in closer bonds the friends of the common Saviour, and through this union to make them more receptive of light and purifying influence from one another. Let it not be turned into a brand of discord. The time will undoubtedly come, when good men will shrink from slaveholding more than from death. But many a sincere disciple is at present blinded to this outrage on human rights; and he ought not to be banished from the table which Christ has spread for all his friends.

I find in your writings a mode of excusing your severity of language, which I think un-

sound. You justify yourselves by the strong rebukes uttered by Jesus Christ. But Christ must be followed cautiously here. Was he not a prophet? Was he not guided by a wisdom granted to him alone? Had he not an insight into the hearts and characters of men, which gave a certainty to his severer judgments? Shall the Christian speak with the authority of his Lord? Nor is this all. Jesus could reprove severely, without the dangers which besets all human reproof. His whole spirit was love. There was not a prejudice or passion in his breast, to darken or distort his judgment. He *could* not err on the side of harshness. Are *we* so secured? Jesus could say of himself, 'I am meek and lowly in heart.' So unbounded was his generosity and candor, that, in the agonies of death, he prayed for the enemies who had nailed him to the cross, and urged in their behalf the only extenuation which their crime would admit. Such a being might safely trust himself to his most excited feelings. His consciousness of perfect love to his worst foes, assured him against injustice. How different was rebuke from the lips of Jesus, from that which breaks from ours! Had we been present, when he said, 'Alas! for you, Pharisees, hypocrites!' we should have heard tones which breathed the purest philanthropy. We should have seen a countenance, on which the indwelling divinity had impressed a celestial love. How different were these rebukes from the harsh tones and hard looks of man! Christ's denunciations had for their groundwork, if I may so speak, a character of perfect benignity, sweetness, forgiveness; and they were in harmony with this. They were scat-

tered through a life, which was spent in spreading blessings with the munificence of a God. You justify your severity by Christ's. Let your spirit be as gentle, your lives as beneficent as his, and I will promise to be contented with your severest rebukes.

Having expressed my disapprobation and fears, I feel that it is right to close this letter with expressing the deep interest I feel in you, not as an association, but as men pledged to the use of all lawful means for the subversion of slavery. There is but one test by which individuals or parties can be judged, and that is the *principles* from which they act, and which they are pledged to support. No matter how many able men a party may number in its ranks; unless pledged to *great principles*, it must pass away, and its leaders sink into oblivion. There are two great principles to which you are devoted, and for which I have always honored you. The first is, the freedom of the press. This you have not only vindicated with your lips and pens; but you have asserted it amidst persecutions. The right of a man to publish his conviction on subjects of deepest concern to society and humanity, this you have held fast when most men would have shrunk from it. This practical assertion of a great principle, I hold to be worth more than the most eloquent professions of it in public meetings, or than all the vindications of it in the closet. I have thanked you, and thank you again, in the name of liberty, for this good service which you have rendered her. I know of none, to whom her debt is greater. There was a time when the freedom of the press needed no defenders in our land, for it was

strong in the love of the people. It was recognized as the pervading life, the conservative power of our institutions. A voice raised against it would have been pronounced moral treason. We clung to it as an immutable principle, as a universal and inalienable right. We received it as an intuitive truth, as no more to be questioned than a law of nature. But 'the times are changed, and we change with them.' Are there no signs, is there nothing to make us fear, that the freedom of speech and the press, regarded as a *right* and a *principle*, is dying out of the hearts of this people? It is not a sufficient answer to say, that the vast majority speak and publish their thoughts without danger. The question is, whether this freedom is distinctly and practically recognized as *every man's right*. Unless it stands on this ground, it is little more than a name; it has no permanent life. To refuse it to a minority, however small, is to loosen every man's hold of it, to violate its sacredness, to break up its foundation. A despotism, too strong for fear, may, through its very strength, allow to the mass great liberty of utterance; but in conceding it as a privilege, and not as a *right*, and by withholding it at pleasure from offensive individuals, the despot betrays himself as truly, as if he had put a seal on every man's lips. That State must not call itself free, in which any party, however small, cannot safely speak their minds; in which any party are exposed to violence for the exercise of a universal right; in which the laws, made to protect all, cannot be sustained against brute force. The freedom of speech and the press seems now to be sharing the lot of all great

principles. History shows us, that all great principles, however ardently espoused for a time, have a tendency to fade into traditions, to degenerate into a hollow cant, to become words of little import, and to remain for declamation, when their vital power is gone. At such a period, every good citizen is called to do what in him lies, to restore their life and power. To some, it may be a disheartening thought, that the battle of liberty is never to end, that its first principles must be established anew, on the very spots where they seemed immovably fixed. But it is the law of our being, that no true good can be made sure without struggle ; and it should cheer us to think, that to struggle for the right is the noblest use of our powers, and the only means of happiness and perfection.

Another ground of my strong interest in your body is, that you are pledged to another principle, far broader than the freedom of the press, and on which this and all other rights repose. You start from the sublimest truth. You oppose slavery, not from political or worldly considerations. You take your stand on the unutterable worth of every human being, and on his inalienable rights as a rational, moral, and immortal child of God. Here is your strength. Unlike the political parties which agitate the country, you have a *principle*, and the grandest which can unite a body of men. That you fully comprehend it, or are always faithful to it, cannot be affirmed ; but you have it, and it is cause of joy to see men seizing it even in an imperfect form. All slavery, all oppressive institutions, all social abuses, spring from or involve contempt of human nature.

The tyrant does not know, *who* it is whom he tramples in the dust. You have caught a glimpse of the truth. The inappreciable worth of every human being, and the derivation of his rights, not from paper constitutions and human laws, but from his spiritual and immortal nature, from his affinity with God, these are the truths, which are to renovate society, by the light of which our present civilization will one day be seen to bear many an impress of barbarism, and by the power of which a real brotherhood will more and more unite the now divided and struggling family of man. My great interest in you lies in your assertion of these truths. The liberation of three millions of slaves is indeed a noble object ; but a greater work is, the diffusion of principles, by which every yoke is to be broken, every government to be regenerated, and a liberty, more precious than civil or political, is to be secured to the world. I know with what indifference the doctrine of the infinite worth of every human being, be his rank or color what it may, is listened to by multitudes. But it is not less true, because men of narrow and earthly minds cannot comprehend it. It is written in blood on the cross of Christ. He taught it when he ascended, and carried our nature to heaven. It is confirmed by all the inquiries of philosophy into the soul, by the progress of the human intellect, by the affections of the human heart, by man's intercourse with God, by his sacrifices for his fellow creatures. I am not discouraged by the fact, that this great truth has been espoused most earnestly by a party which numbers in its ranks few great names. The prosperous and distinguished of this world,

given as they generally are to epicurean self-indulgence and to vain show, are among the last to comprehend the worth of a human being, to penetrate into the evils of society, or to impart to it a fresh impulse. The less prosperous classes furnish the world with its reformers and martyrs. These, however, from imperfect culture, are apt to narrow themselves to one idea, to fasten their eyes on a single evil, to lose the balance of their minds, to kindle with a feverish enthusiasm. Let such remember, that no man should take on himself the office of a reformer, whose zeal in a particular cause is not tempered by extensive sympathies and universal love. This is a high standard, but not too high for men who have started from the great principle of your association. They, who found their efforts against oppression on *every* man's near relation to God, on every man's participation of a moral and immortal nature, cannot without singular inconsistency grow fierce against the many in their zeal for a few. From a body, founded on such a principle, ought to come forth more enlightened friends of the race, more enlarged philanthropists, than have yet been trained. Guard from dishonor the divine truth, which you have espoused as your creed and your rule. Show forth its energy in what you do and suffer. Show forth its celestial purity, in your freedom from unworthy passions. Prove it to be from God, by serene trust in his Providence, by fearless obedience of his will, by imitating his impartial justice and his universal love.

I now close this long letter. I have spoken the more freely, because I shall probably be prevented by various and pressing objects, from

communicating with you again. In your great and holy purpose, you have my sympathies and best wishes. I implore for you the guidance and blessing of God.

Very sincerely, your friend,

WM. E. CHANNING.

LETTER OF DR. CHANNING.

☞ The foregoing Letter has been tendered to us, by its author, for publication in the *Liberator*. It will answer one good purpose, at least—namely, to stimulate conversation, excite private and public discussion, and thus help to carry on THE GOOD WORK OF AGITATION. Nothing is so pregnant with evil, social, political and moral, as the public mind in a state of stagnancy; for it then becomes a Dead Sea, in which nothing that has life can exist. Whatever, therefore, serves to ruffle its surface, or put its water into billowy commotion,—from the gentlest breath of heaven to the all-sweeping hurricane,—is better than the absence of vitality. So this Letter, though it is defective in principle, false in its charity, and inconsistent in its reasoning, will doubtless prove useful to the cause of dying humanity; useful as a provocative, as better than something worse, as a challenge to universal attention. Its spirit is complacent and amicable; its purpose, unquestionably good; its style, elaborate and transpicuous. The motives of its author, in addressing it to the abolitionists of this country at the present time, we doubt not are pure, benevolent, commendable. Dr. Channing, if he is sometimes cautious even to criminality, has no duplicity. We have never distrusted, and certainly do not intend to impeach, his sincerity; but sincerity is compatible with error not less than with truth: it is neither wisdom nor rectitude: it is a divorcement from hypocrisy, but not necessarily an alliance with right. As a whole,

(though a small portion of it is not without value,) this Letter contains little to enlighten, reform or elevate public sentiment; for what is contradictory fails to be either instructive or admonitory.

The recent spirited appeal of Dr. Channing from the arbitrary decision of the city authorities, respecting the opening of Faneuil Hall, as well as his Letter to Henry Clay, led us to hope that his vision was becoming more clear, his spirit more intrepid, and his acquaintance with the real state of the hearts of slaveholders more accurate. But this Letter shows no improvement:—nay, it bears marks of new infirmities.

Its homily to abolitionists upon the christian obligation not to resort to carnal weapons in self-defence, or in aid of the cause of liberty, finds a sincere response in our own bosom, because it is in accordance with our individual sentiments. But, with all deference, we ask, is it consistent, is it decorous, can it be instructive, for a man who rejects the doctrine of non-resistance, to enforce it as a religious duty upon others—upon those who are most exposed to perils, suffering, and lawless outrages of the most flagitious character? We humbly conceive that Dr. Channing is not qualified, at present, to instruct abolitionists in relation to ‘the peace principle.’ There is a beam in his own eye—a mote only in theirs. He confesses that his late justly venerated friend, Dr. Worcester, was more long-suffering, pacific, and merciful, in *principle*, towards enemies, than he is himself disposed to be! Again he observes—‘I do not say, that a man may in no case defend himself by force.’ Indeed! But a greater than Dr. Channing does—Jesus, the Prince of Peace. We are not any wiser for the exception which the Dr. makes: he neglects to designate the case in which a man *may* ‘defend himself by force.’ But he does not hesitate to express his ‘disapprobation of Mr. Lovejoy’s resistance,’ and also his opinion that ‘it is time for philanthropy to stop, when it can only

advance by wading through blood.' The theory, then, if we rightly apprehend it, is this:

A cause which is *not* benevolent will authorize the shedding of blood without guilt; that which *is*, will not; so that if I kill a robber merely for my own preservation, I do well—but if I lay down my life in defence of liberty, the rights of man, and the cause of God, all must of course be 'shocked by this incongruity of means and ends'! Certainly this is a nice distinction. 'If God does not allow us to forward a work of love [in a fearful emergency] by fighting for it,' what other work may be forwarded at the point of the bayonet? If men may fight at all, may they not fight for that which is most valuable, which most deeply concerns mankind, which generously seeks universal instead of partial good? We should like to know how it happens, that abolitionists are obligated to allow themselves to be torn in pieces by human tigers, any more than others, or why they may not fight for liberty like others.

To the other complaints of Dr. Channing against the use of 'hard language' by the abolitionists, against calling slaveholders robbers and men-stealers, and excluding them from the communion table, we have barely room to say, that they originate clearly in the unwillingness of Dr. C. to judge of the tree by its fruits. We may denounce sin in the abstract, or even in the lump, as much as we please; but to say, 'Thou art the man,'—to identify and arraign men as sinners, ah! that is not to be tolerated by decency, good manners, or christian charity! But to show how utterly incoherent and strangely contradictory is Dr. C's language on slavery, we subjoin the following *moral cross readings* from his writings. Here are paradoxes!

DR. CHANNING versus DR. CHANNING.
Republicans & Christians alias *Robbers & Menstealers.*

NOT GUILTY.

GUILTY.

'Abolitionism seems to me to have been intolerant towards the slaveholders, and

'He, who cannot see a brother, a child of God, a man possessing all the rights

towards those in the free states who oppose them, or who refuse to take part in their measures. I say first, towards the slaveholder. The abolitionist has not spoken, and cannot speak against slavery too strongly. No language can exceed the enormity of the wrong. But the whole class of slaveholders often meet a treatment in anti-slavery publications which is felt to be unjust, and is certainly unwise. . . . The man who holds slaves for gain, is the worst of robbers; for he selfishly robs his fellow creatures not only of their property, but of themselves. He is the worst of tyrants; for whilst absolute governments spoil men of civil, he strips them of personal rights. But *I do not*, cannot believe, that the MAJORITY of slaveholders are of the character now described. I believe that the MAJORITY, could they be persuaded of the consistency of emancipation with the well-being of the colored race and with social order, (!) would relinquish their hold on the slave, and sacrifice their imagined property in him to the claims of justice and humanity. They shrink from emancipation, because it seems to them a precipice. Having seen the colored man continually dependent on foreign guidance and control, they think him incapable of providing for himself. Having seen the laboring class kept by force, they feel as if the removal of his restraint would

of humanity, under a skin darker than his own, *wants the vision of a Christian.* He worships the Outward. *The Spirit is not yet revealed to him.*—[Work on Slavery, p. 10, Introduction.]

‘The spirit of Christianity is universal justice. *It respects all the rights of all beings.* It suffers no being, however obscure, to be wronged, *without condemning the wrong-doer.*’—p. 11 do.

‘The slaveholder claims the slave as his property. The very idea of a slave is, that he belongs to another, that he is bound to live and labor for another, to be another’s instrument, and to make another’s will his habitual law, however adverse to his own. Another owns him, and, of course, has a right to his time and strength, a right to the fruits of his labor, a right to task him without his consent, and to determine the kind and duration of his toil, a right to confine him to any bounds, a right to extort the required work by stripes, a right, in a word, to use him as a tool, without contract, against his will, and in denial of his right to dispose of himself, or to use his power for his own good.’—p. 13.

‘The very essence of slavery is, to put a man defenceless into the hands of another.’—p. 17.

‘Now this claim of property in a human being is al-

be a signal to universal lawlessness and crime. That such opinions absolve from all blame those who *perpetuate* slavery. I do not say. . . Still, while there is much to be condemned in the prevalent feelings at the South, we have no warrant for denying to all slaveholders, moral and religious excellence. The whole history of the world shows us, that a *culpable* blindness, in regard to one class of obligations, may consist with *severe reverence for religious and moral principles*, so far as they are understood. In estimating men's characters, we must never forget the disadvantages under which they labor. Slavery upheld as it is at the South by the deepest prejudices of education, by the sanction of laws, by the prescription of ages, and by real difficulties attending emancipation, cannot be easily viewed in that region as it appears to more distant and impartial observers. The hatefulness of the system ought to be strongly exposed, and it cannot be exposed too strongly; but the hatefulness must not be attached to all who *SUSTAIN* slavery. There are pure and generous spirits at the South: they are to be honored the more for the sore trials amidst which their virtues have gained strength. The abolitionists, in their zeal, seem to have overlooked these truths in a great degree, by their intolerance toward the slaveholder; have felt toward him indignation rather than sympathy; and

together false, groundless. No such right of man in man can exist. To hold and treat him as property is to inflict a great wrong, to incur the *guilt* of oppression. This position there is a difficulty in maintaining, on account of its exceeding obviousness. *It is too plain for proof.* To defend it is like trying to confirm a *self-evident truth*. The man who, on hearing the claim to property in man, does not *see* and *feel* that it is A CRUEL USURPATION, is hardly to be reached by reasoning; for it is hard to find any plainer principles than what he begins with denying.'—p. 14.

'If one man may be rightfully reduced to slavery, then there is not a human being on whom the same chain may not be imposed. Now let every reader ask himself this question: Could I, can I, be rightfully seized, and made an article of property; be made a passive instrument of another's will and pleasure; be subjected to another's irresponsible power; be subjected to stripes at another's will; be denied the control and use of my own limbs and faculties for my own good? Does any man, so questioned, doubt, waver, look about him for an answer? Is not the reply given *immediately, intuitively, BY HIS WHOLE INWARD BEING*? Does not an unhesitating, unerring conviction spring up in my breast, that no other man can acquire such a right in

weakened the effect of their just invectives against the system *which he upholds.*— [Letter to Birney.]

‘A man born among slaves, accustomed to this relation from his birth, taught its necessity by venerated parents, associating it with all whom he reveres, and too familiar with its evils to see and feel their magnitude, can hardly be expected to look on slavery as it appears to more impartial and distant observers. Let it not be said, that, when new light is offered him, he is criminal in rejecting it. Are we all willing to receive new light? Can we wonder that such a man should be slow to be convinced of the criminality of an abuse sanctioned by prescription, and which has so interwoven itself with all the habits, employments, and economy of life, that he can hardly conceive of the existence of society without this all-pervading element? May he not be true to his convictions of duty in other relations, though he grievously err in this?’—pp. 57, 58.

‘The slave virtually suffers the wrong of robbery, though with *utter unconsciousness* on the part of those who inflict it.’—p. 53.

‘It is possible to abhor and oppose bad institutions, and yet to abstain from indiscriminate condemnation of those who cling to them, and even to see in their ranks greater virtue than in ourselves. It is true, and ought

myself? Do we not repel *indignantly and with horror* the thought of being reduced to the condition of tools and chattels to a fellow-creature? *Is there any moral truth more deeply rooted in us, than that such a degradation would be an infinite wrong?* And if this impression be a delusion, on what single moral conviction can we rely? This deep assurance, that we cannot be rightfully made another’s property, does not rest on the hue of our skins, or the place of our birth, or our strength or wealth. These things do not enter our thoughts. *The consciousness of indestructible rights is a part of our moral being.* In casting the yoke from ourselves as *an unspeakable wrong, WE CONDEMN OURSELVES AS WRONG-DOERS AND OPPRESSORS IN LAYING IT ON ANY WHO SHARE OUR NATURE.*”—p. 15, 16.

‘Who of us can unblushingly lift his head and say that God has written “Master” there? or who can show the word “Slave” engraved on his brother’s brow?’—p. 20.

‘To deny the right of a human being to himself, to his own limbs and faculties, to his energy of body and mind, is *an absurdity too gross to be confuted by any thing but a simple statement.* Yet this absurdity is involved in the idea of his belonging to another.’—‘If a human being cannot *without*

to be cheerfully acknowledged, that in the slaveholding States may be found some of the greatest names of our history, and, what is still more important, bright examples [i. e. among slaveholders] of private virtue and *Christian love*.—p. 66.

‘Their are masters who have thrown off the natural prejudices of their position, *who see slavery as it is*, and who hold the slave chiefly, if not wholly, from disinterested considerations; and *these deserve great praise*. They deplore and abhor the institution; but believing that partial emancipation, in the present condition of society, would bring unmixed evil on bond and free, they think themselves bound to continue the relation, until it shall be dissolved by comprehensive and systematic measures of the state. There are many of them who would shudder as much as we at reducing a freeman to bondage, but who are appalled by what seem to them the perils and difficulties of liberating multitudes, born and brought up to that condition.—There are *many*, who, *nominally* holding the slave as *property*, still hold him for his own good and for the public order, and would blush to retain him on other grounds. Are such men to be set down among the unprincipled?’ pp. 59, 60.

‘Sympathy with the slave has often degenerated into injustice towards the master.

infinite injustice, he seized as property, then he cannot, *without equal wrong*, be held and used as such.”—p. 21.

‘If the slave receive *injury without measure* at the first moment of the outrage, is he less injured by being held fast the second or the third? Does the duration of the wrong, *the increase of it* by continuance, convert it into right?’—‘Now the ground, on which the seizure of the African on his own shore is condemned, is, that that he is a man who has by his nature a right to be free. Ought not, then, the same condemnation to light on the continuance of his yoke?’—p. 22.

‘Now the true owner of a human being is made manifest to all. It is Himself. No brand on the slave was ever so conspicuous as the mark of property which God has set on him. God, in making him a rational and moral being, has put a glorious stamp on him, which all the slave-legislation and slave-markets of worlds cannot efface.’—‘From his very nature it follows, that so to seize him is to *offer an insult to his Maker*, and to inflict aggravated social wrong. Into every human being, God has breathed an immortal spirit, more precious than the whole outward creation. No earthly or celestial language can exaggerate the worth of a human being.’—‘Did God make such a being to be

I wish to be understood, that, in ranking slavery among the greatest wrongs, I speak of the injury endured by the slave, and *not of the character of the master*. These are distinct points. The former does not determine the latter. . . . Because a great injury is done to another, it does not follow that he who does it is a depraved man; for he may do it *unconsciously*, and, still more, may do it in the belief that he confers a good. . . . We must judge others, not by our light, but by their own. We must take their place, and consider what allowance we in their position might justly expect. . . . Our ancestors committed a deed now branded as piracy. Were they therefore the off-scouring of the earth? Were not some of them among the best of their times? The administration of religion in almost all past ages has been a violation of the sacred rights of conscience. How many sects have persecuted and shed blood! Were their members, therefore, monsters of depravity?—pp. 56, 57.

‘As an example of the unjust severity which I blame, it may be stated, that some among you have been accustomed to denounce slaveholders as ‘robbers and man-stealers.’ Now, robbery and stealing are words of plain signification. They imply that a man has *consciously & with knowledge* taken what belongs to another. To steal is to seize privily, to rob is to seize by force, the ac-

owned as a tree or a brute? *How plainly* was he made to exercise, unfold, improve his highest powers; made for a moral, spiritual good! and how is he wronged, and *his Creator opposed*, when he is forced and broken into a tool to another’s physical enjoyment!’ ‘The sacrifice of such a being to another’s will, to another’s present, outward, ill-comprehended good, is *the greatest violence which can be offered to any creature of God.*’—p. 23, 25, 26, 27.

‘What! own a spiritual being, a being made to know and adore God, and who is to outlive the sun and stars! Should we not deem it a *wrong which no punishment could expiate*, were one of our children seized as property, and driven by the whip to toil? And shall God’s child, dearer to him than an only son to a human parent, be thus degraded? Every thing else may be owned in the universe; but a moral, rational being cannot be property. Suns and stars may be owned, but not the lowest spirit. Touch any thing but this. Lay not your hand on God’s rational offspring. The whole spiritual world cries out, Forbear!’—p. 29.

‘I have taken it for granted that no reader would be so wanting in moral discrimination and moral feeling, as to urge that men may rightfully be seized and held as property, because, various governments have so ordained.—

known property of one's neighbor. Now, is the slaveholder to be charged with these crimes? Does he *know* (!) that the slave he holds is not his own? On the contrary, is there any part of his property, to which he thinks himself to have a strong er right? . . . Do we not know that there are men at the North, who, regarding the statute-book as of equal authority with the sermon on the Mount, and looking on legal as synonymous with moral right, believe that the civil law can create property in a man, as easily as in a brute? . . . We are sure that they [slaveholders] do view the slave as *property*; and thus viewing him, they are no more guilty of robbery and stealing than one of you would be, who, by *misapprehension*, (!) should appropriate to himself what belongs to another (!) And are we authorised to say, that there are none at the South, who, if they should discover their *misapprehension*, (!) would choose to impoverish themselves, rather than live by robbery and crime? Are all hearts open to our inspection? Has God assigned to us his prerogative of judgment? Is it not a violation of the laws of Christian charity, to charge on men, whose general deportment shows a sense of justice, such flagrant crimes as robbery and theft?— [Letter to Abolitionists.]

‘Allow me to speak of what seems to me a very objectionable mode of action,

What! is human legislature the measure of right? Are God's laws to be repealed by man's?’—p. 29.

‘That same inward principle, which teaches a man what he is bound to do to others, teaches equally, and at the same instant, what others are bound to do to him . . . Accordingly, there is no deeper principle in human nature than the *consciousness of rights*.’—p. 34.

‘Slavery violates, not one, but all human rights; and violates them, not incidentally, but *necessarily*, SYSTEMATICALLY, from its very nature.’ ‘In truth, no robbery is so great as that to which the slave is *habitually* subjected.’—pp. 50, 53.

‘The plea of benefit to the slave and the state avails him [the slaveholder] nothing.’—p. 61.

‘We can apply to slavery no worse name than its own. Men have always shrunk *instinctively* from this state, as the most degraded. No punishment, save death, has been more dreaded, and to avoid it death has often been endured.’—p. 67.

‘Is man to be trusted with absolute power over his fellow-creature? . . . Absolute power always corrupts human nature, more or less.’—‘Suppose the master to be ever so humane. Still, he is not always watching over his slave. He has his pleasures to attend

which your Society are inclined to adopt—I mean, the exclusion of slaveholders from the privileges of the Christian church. I did hope that the partition walls, which an unenlightened zeal has so long erected round the communion table, were giving way; and that none would be excluded, except such as should give proof in their lives of hostility to the Christian law. That the Lord's supper should be turned into a weapon of assault on our opponents, is a monstrous abuse of it. Will it be said, that the slaveholder cannot be a Christian, and must therefore be shut out? Do we not know, that God has true worshippers in a land of slavery? Is adherence to a usage, (!) which has existed for ages in the Church, an infallible proof of an unsanctified mind? . . . The Lord's supper was instituted to unite in closer bonds *the friends of the common Savior*, and through this union to make them more receptive of light and purifying influence from one another. Let it not be turned into a brand of discord (!) The time will undoubtedly come, when good men will shrink from slaveholding more than from death. But *many a sincere disciple* is at present blinded to this OUTRAGE ON HUMAN RIGHTS; and he *ought not* to be banished from the table which Christ has spread *for all his friends*.—[Ibid.]

to. He is often absent. His terrible power must be delegated. And to whom is it delegated? To men prepared to govern others, by having learned to govern themselves? To men having a deep interest in the slaves? . . . Who does not know, how often the overseer pollutes the plantation by his licentiousness, as well as scourges it by his severity? In the hands of such a man, the lash is placed. To such a man is committed the most fearful trust on earth! For his cruelties, the master must answer, *as truly as if they were his own*.—pp. 87, 88.

‘The slave *must* meet CRUEL TREATMENT’, either inwardly or outwardly. Either the soul or the body must receive the blow. Either the flesh must be tortured, or the spirit be struck down.’—‘It is a usurpation of the Divine dominion, and its natural influence is to produce a spirit of superiority to Divine as well as to human laws.’—‘Its direct tendency is to annihilate the control of Christianity.’—pp. 91, 92, 93.

THE TREE KNOWN BY ITS FRUITS.

The following brief extracts are taken from a speech of William Goodell, delivered at the annual meeting of the Massachusetts A. S. Society in Boston, January, 1836 :

2. '*It is wrong to impeach men's motives.*' So says the oracle of fastidious decorum! Ah! Is it? Then, of course, it is wrong to reprove men's *sins*; for there is no sin without wicked and selfish motives. What broader shelter can Sin desire than this? Only imagine a Nathan reproving his monarch, with a very courtly disclaimer of impeaching his motives!—Listen to the meek and lowly Saviour—'Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.' Did he disclaim an impeachment of their motives?—Take a lesson from the courteous Apostle—'Thou child of the Devil! Thou enemy of all righteousness.' But 'pray do not understand me, good Mr. Simon Magus, as impeaching any gentleman's motives!' What would you think of such an Apostle?

3. '*He betrays an unchristian spirit.*' So says modern decorum, whenever any one manifests any moral indignation against oppression and crime!—Our old-fashioned Divines used to tell us of a *holy* and an *unholy* indignation. Modern decorum has rendered the distinction obsolete; except, perhaps, when 'gentlemen of property and standing' give demonstration of their wrath against the reprovers of sin!

Go, ye fastidious ones, and learn what this meaneth. 'God is angry with the wicked every day.' 'Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children.' 'I beheld the transgressors and was grieved.' 'Do I not hate them that hate thee?' 'Ye that fear the Lord, hate evil.' 'Be angry and sin not.' 'Jesus looked round upon them *with anger*, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts.' The courtly Caiaphas perhaps might have thought he manifested an *unchristian spirit*!

4. But the most attractive and subtle form of this modern decorum is found in the very acute

and philosophical distinction which *separates the sinner from his sin*; the actor from the action. The guardians of our Churches, a few years ago, were valiant in combatting the ingenious theory, which talked of *punishing* the sin without touching a hair on the head of the sinner! But the greater part of them have since made wonderful proficiency in the same school, and have left their polemic tutors altogether in the back ground! Our most strenuous contenders for the faith,—at least a large portion of them—to save the risk of *punishing* the sin as it alights from the back of the sinner, have fairly made the discovery that *sin exists without any sinner at all!* Oh, yes! There is *theft* without a *thief!*—*Robbery* without a *robber!*—Instead of saying, as in olden time—‘Thou art the *man*,’ we must *now* say, ‘Thou art the *sin*—No! Not the sin! The mistake, the *‘calamity!’*—Instead of saying, ‘*By their fruits shall ye know THEM*,’ we should rather say—‘By the fruits ye shall *not* know whether the tree be good or evil, or whether there be any tree at all!’

It is humiliating to find so splendid, and in many respects, so admirable a work as that of Dr. Channing, despoiled of its beauty, and rifled of its power by so miserable a fallacy. Many of our friends, I am aware, have criticised the other errors of the book, without seeming to have detected this primary source of them all. Nay—in some instances, while seeming almost to swallow the gilded hook themselves. Dr. Channing takes many exceptions to our statements and measures. But it would be easy to show that every one of them originates in this fallacy. Yes! If Dr. Channing could only be persuaded to say that he who commits robbery is a robber, and that he who steals is a thief, he would become, not almost, but altogether, such an Abolitionist as ourselves. ‘Little children, let no man deceive you’ by this fanciful separation of the actor from the action.—‘He that *doeth* righteousness is righteous.’ But ‘he that committeth sin is of the Evil One.’

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